

**Notice of Allowability**

Application No.

09/522,162

Applicant(s)

VERDI ET AL.

Examiner

Art Unit

Michael C. Heck

3623

**-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--**

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTOL-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. **THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS.** This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1. ☒ This communication is responsive to Amendment filed 06 August 2005.
2. ☒ The allowed claim(s) is/are 2-10 and 12.
3. ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some\* c) ☐ None of the:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* Certified copies not received: \_\_\_\_\_.

Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application.

**THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.**

4. ☐ A SUBSTITUTE OATH OR DECLARATION must be submitted. Note the attached EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT or NOTICE OF INFORMAL PATENT APPLICATION (PTO-152) which gives reason(s) why the oath or declaration is deficient.
5. ☒ CORRECTED DRAWINGS (as "replacement sheets") must be submitted.
- (a) ☒ including changes required by the Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) attached
- 1) ☒ hereto or 2) ☐ to Paper No./Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_.
- (b) ☐ including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No./Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_.
- Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet. Replacement sheet(s) should be labeled as such in the header according to 37 CFR 1.121(d).
6. ☐ DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

**Attachment(s)**

1. ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2. ☒ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3. ☐ Information Disclosure Statements (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08), Paper No./Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_
4. ☐ Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit of Biological Material
5. ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6. ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413), Paper No./Mail Date \_\_\_\_\_
7. ☒ Examiner's Amendment/Comment
8. ☒ Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance
9. ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

  
TARIQ R. HAFEZ  
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER  
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3600

### EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Anne Vachon Dougherty, Reg. No. 30,374, on 06 October 2005.

- On Claim 12, sub-paragraph d), delete "second predetermined timer period" and insert -- second predetermined time period --.

2. In addition to the above, the application has been amended as follows:

On page 1, after Title, insert,

-- Related U.S. Application

This application claims priority to U.S. Provisional Application entitled, "COMPUTERIZED KNOWLEDGE BROKERAGE SYSTEM," Application Number 60/124,289, filed on March 12, 1999, which application is hereby incorporated by reference. --

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Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the Examiner should be directed to Michael C. Heck whose telephone number is (571) 272-6730. The Examiner can normally be reached Monday thru Friday between the hours of 8:30am - 4:30pm. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq R. Hafiz can be reached on (571) 273-6729.

Any response to this action should be mailed to:

**Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office  
P.O. Box 1450  
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450**

Or faxed to:

**(571) 273-8300**

[Official communications; including After Final communications labeled "**Box AF**"]

**(571) 273-6730**

[Informal/Draft communication, labeled "**PROPOSED**" or "**DRAFT**"]

*MCH*  
mch

06 October 2005

### **REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE**

1. Claims 2-10 and 12 are allowed.
2. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

The present invention of claim 6 and claim 12 disclose a method for computer networked consulting. As to claim 6, the method comprises establishing a predetermined group comprising more than two members; receiving at a central location over a wide-area computer network, within a predetermined first time period for receipt of first electronic messages, a first electronic message from a first member of the group; providing the first message to a consultant for defining of a first query based on the first message; electronically sending the first query from the central location to at least a portion of the predetermined group and automatically starting monitoring a predetermined second time period upon said sending; receiving over the wide-area computer network at the central location, within said predetermined second time period, at least one electronic message from at least one second member of the group comprising a response to the first query; preparing an analysis at the central location related to the first query and the response to it; electronically sending the analysis over the wide-area computer network from the central location to the predetermined group; electronically sending the first query from the central location to at least one non-group member if no messages are received within the predetermined second time period based on said monitoring; preparing a non-group analysis related to the non-group member responses to the first query; and electronically sending the non-group analysis from the central location to at least the first member of the group. As to claim 12, the

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method comprises establishing a predetermined group comprising two or more members; receiving at a central location over a wide-area computer network, within computer network, within a predetermined first time period for receipt of first messages, a plurality of first electronic messages from members of the predetermined group; generating at least one set of queries by a consultant based on at least a portion of the first messages; electronically sending the at least one set of queries from the central location to the predetermined group and automatically starting monitoring of a second predetermined time period upon said sending; receiving at the central location over the wide-area computer network, within a predetermined second time period, a plurality of second electronic messages responsive to at least a portion of the set of queries; preparing at least one analysis based on a query in the set and any corresponding responses; electronically sending the analysis from the central location to the predetermined group; electronically sending the at least one set of queries from the central location to at least one non-group member if no messages are received within the predetermined second time period based on said monitoring; preparing at least one non-group analysis related to non-group member responses to a query in the set of queries and any corresponding responses; and electronically sending the non-group analysis from the central location to the predetermined group.

The closest prior art Clayton (Clayton, Delphi: A technique to harness expert opinion for critical decision-making tasks in education, Educational Psychology, Vol. 17, No. 4, December 1997, p. 373-386 [PROQUEST]) teaches the Delphi method that requires that a panel of experts on the subject under study be selected and

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communication between individuals is orchestrated by a director and occurs via written questionnaires and feedback reports. In phase one, a stimulus such as a questionnaire is devised and mailed to each member selected soliciting their co-operation in the study as well as their opinions or answers to certain events or questions based on their experienced judgment. The responses from co-operating members are then translated into general generic statements about which consensus is then sought. After the questionnaire is returned, the monitor team summarizes the results and, based upon the results, develops a new questionnaire for the respondent group. The respondent group is usually given at least one opportunity to re-evaluate its original answers based upon examination of the group response. Clayton and the prior art of record fail to teach or suggest receiving at a central location over a wide-area computer network, within a predetermined first time period, a first message from a first member of the group; sending the first query from the central location to at least one non-group member if no messages are received within the predetermined second time period, preparing a non-group analysis related to the non-group member responses to the first query; and sending the non-group analysis from the central location to at least the first member of the group. Ackerman et al. (Ackerman et al., Answer Garden 2: Merging Organizational Memory with Collaborative Help, ACM conference proceedings on Computer Supported Cooperative Work, ACM Press, NY, NY, 1996, p. 97-105) in combination with Clayton teach Answer Garden supports organizational memory in two ways: by making recorded knowledge retrievable and by making individuals with knowledge accessible. Users seek answers to commonly asked questions through a

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set of diagnostic questions or other informational retrieval mechanisms. If the user cannot find an answer or the answer is incomplete, the user may ask the question through the system. If the question was a common one, the expert could insert the question and its answer back into the information database. Answer Garden is shown implemented in the World Wide Web and Answer Garden 2 (AG2) consists of a second-generation system architecture for organizational memory and collaborative help support. The architecture decomposes the Answer Garden functionality into a set of distributed software services. Collaborative help functionality provides help to users at their own explanation level and potentially with iterative diagnosis. Providing help from other people – such as colleagues on the same hall or other group members – allows people to seek help first from the people most likely to know the local content. While staying local is important, it can also be organizationally dysfunctional when there is no local expert available. In these situations, a means for escalating answers past the local group is required. The process continues, perhaps routing the question to an expertise engine to find a suitable human expert, to a help desk, or to agents that search for information on the Web or in proprietary information sources. One can even imagine agents that hire outside consultants if the need is great enough. Ackerman et al. in combination with Clayton and the prior art of record fail to teach or suggest that the system sets a timer and automatically sends the query to a non-group member if no responses are received from a first predetermined group.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably

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accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

***Conclusion***

3. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure

- Wlodka (DE 197 50 749 A1) discloses an on-line consultancy service that uses a dual system for on-line communication between a user and a knowledge databank.



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*mch*  
mch

06 October 2005

  
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